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NATION'S LABOR PROBLEM

OVER A MILLION AND A HALF
WOMEN WORK AS FARM HANDS
IN THE UNITED STATES.

By Peter Radford
Lecturer National Farmers' Union.

Our government never faced so tremendous a problem as that now lying dormant at the doors of congress and the legislatures, and which, when aroused, will shake this nation from center to circumference, and make civilization hide its face in shame. That problem is—women in the field.

The last federal census reports show we now have 1,514,000 women working in the field, most of them south of the Mason and Dixon line. There were approximately a million negro slaves working in the fields when liberated by the emancipation proclamation. We have freed out slaves and our women have taken their places in bondage. We have broken the shackles off the negroes and welded them upon our daughters.

The Chain-Gang of Civilization.
A million women in bondage in the southern fields form the chain-gang of civilization—the industrial tragedy of the age. There is no overseer quite so cruel as that of unrestrained greed, no whip that stings like the lash of suborned destiny, and no auctioneer's block quite so revolting as that of organized avarice.

The president of the United States was recently lauded by the press, and very properly so, for suggesting mediation between the engineers and railroad managers in adjusting their schedule of time and pay. The engineers threatened to strike if their wages were not increased from approximately ten to eleven dollars per day and service reduced from ten to eight hours and a similar readjustment of the overtime schedule. Our women are working in the field, many of them barefooted, for less than 50 cents per day, and their schedule is the rising sun and the evening star, and after the day's work is over they milk the cows, slop the hogs and rock the baby to sleep. Is anyone mediating over their problems, and to whom shall they threaten a strike?

Congress has listened approvingly to those who toil at the forge and behind the counter, and many of our statesmen have smiled at the threats and have fanned the flame of unrest among industrial laborers. But women are as surely the final victims of industrial warfare as they are the burden-bearers in the war between nations, and those who arbitrate and mediate the differences between capital and labor should not forget that when the expenses of an industry are unnecessarily increased, society foots the bill by drafting a new consignment of women from the home to the field. Pinch no Crumb From Women's Crust of Bread.

No financial award can be made without someone footing the bill, and we commend to those who accept the responsibility of the distribution of industrial justice, the still small voice of the woman in the field as she pleads for mercy, and we beg that they pinch no crumb from her crust of bread or put another patch upon her ragged garments.

We beg that they listen to the scream of horror from the eagle on every American dollar that is wrung from the brow of toiling women and hear the Goddess of Justice hiss at a verdict that increases the want of woman to satisfy the greed of man.

The women behind the counter and in the factory cry aloud for sympathy and the press thunders out in their defense and the pulpit pleads for mercy, but how about the woman in the field? Will not these powerful exponents of human rights turn their talent, energies and influence to her relief? Will the Goddess of Liberty enthroned at Washington hold the calloused hand and soothe the feverish brow of her sex who sows and reaps the nation's harvest or will she permit the male of the species to shove women—weak and weary—from the bread-line of industry to the back alleys of poverty?

Women and Children First.
The census enumerators tell us that of the 1,514,000 women who work in the fields as farm hands 409,000 are sixteen years of age and under. What is the final destiny of a nation whose future mothers spend their girlhood days behind the plow, pitching hay and hauling manure, and what is to become of womanly culture and refinement that grace the home, charm society and enthrone man to leap to glory in noble achievements if our daughters are raised in the society of the ox and the companionship of the plow?

In that strata between the ages of sixteen and forty-five are 950,000 women working as farm hands and many

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